

# A Study of Mapping Between a Source Domain and a Target Domain in Food-Related Metaphors\*

Heechul Lee · Chonghyuck Kim\*\*

(Chonbuk National University)

Lee, Heechul & Kim, Chonghyuck. (2015). A Study of Mapping Between a Source Domain and a Target Domain in Food-Related Metaphors. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal* 23(4), 131-147. There are many expressions based on such food-related metaphors in Korean as HUMANS ARE FOOD, DEALING WITH HUMANS IS COOKING FOOD, HUMAN DISPOSITION IS FOOD TASTE, TYPES OF HUMAN EMOTIONS ARE WAYS OF FOOD INTAKE, HUMAN EXPERIENCES ARE FOOD TASTE, QUALITIES OF IDEAS ARE CONDITIONS OF FOOD, etc. (cf. Choi, 2014). The purpose of this paper is to show that these seemingly individual and isolated metaphors correlate highly with one another and to reach generalizations about some food-related metaphors in Korean. To this end, this research will exploit not only mapping processes between a source semantic domain and a target one, but also sub-mapping and sub-sub-mapping as in Khajeh and Abdullah (2012). The separate food-related metaphors mentioned above will be generalized, mapping the source domain of food onto the target domain of humans as a multi-dimensional structured whole.

**Key Words:** food metaphors, mapping, source domain, target domain

## 1. Introduction

One of major arguments by cognitive linguistics is that language use cannot

---

\* This paper was partially supported by the international collaborative research funds of Chonbuk National University, 2007.

\*\* The first author is Heechul Lee and the corresponding author, Chonghyuck Kim, a former professor at National University of Singapore.

be separated from our daily experiences (Casad, 1996). Our everyday experiences function as bases upon which our understanding of intangible concepts relies through a conceptual metaphor. A conceptual metaphor is composed of a source domain and a target domain. The elements of a source domain are related to bodily experiences in everyday life, so they are concrete and better understood, whereas those of a target domain are abstract and accordingly more difficult to understand.

Metaphorical concept correlates a target domain with a source domain and is expressed in the form of such equation as TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN. For example, in the HUMANS ARE FOOD metaphor, humans are the subject of investigation, and food is what it is linked to (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). In a conceptual metaphor, the elements in the source domain are mapped onto those in the target domain so that abstract concepts in the target domain are comprehended through experiences in the source domain that human beings undergo in their daily life (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a, 1980b; Yu, 2008). Conceptual embodiment is the idea that concepts exist depending upon the bodily nature of human beings and relying upon their experiences (Lakoff, 1987). This paper shows that crucial elements of human existence are empirically understood through the elements of food, which are part of our daily life. To do so, it deals with several cases of sub-mapping between sub-source domains derived from the elements of the source domain of food and corresponding sub-target domains originated from the elements of the target domain of human beings (Khajeh & Abdullah, 2012).

## 2. The HUMANS ARE FOOD metaphor

Let us examine the following sentence which contains an example of food-related metaphor.

- (1) oay na-l mos cap-a-mek-ese antali-nya?  
 why I-ACC NEG catch-LNK-eat-CLM be.impatient-Q  
 'Why are you impatient to catch and eat me?'

As seen in (1), humans are metaphorically described as food. In other words, food is a source domain and humans a target domain, which is shown in a diagram, as follows:

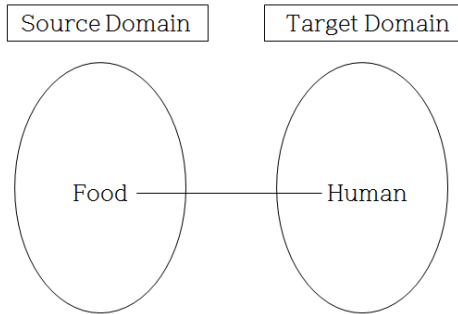


Diagram 1. Mapping between food and humans

The above diagram shows the mapping between food and human beings. There are, of course, many elements related to food such as ways of cooking, different tastes, ways of intake, food conditions and so on, which are crucial elements of food. Correspondingly, there are also many elements related to human beings such as ways of dealing with humans, disposition, emotions, experiences, qualities of ideas, etc, which are also crucial elements of human existence (Lim, 2003). The elements in the source domain of food and those in the target domain of human beings are shown in the diagram below.

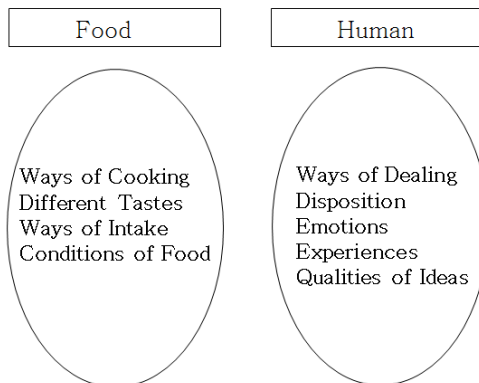


Diagram 2. Elements of each domain

The elements themselves in the source domain of food function as the sub-source domains and, likewise, those in the target domain of human beings as the sub-target domains, which will be shown throughout the rest of this paper.

### 2.1. The DEALING IS COOKING metaphor

Let us discuss the sub-source domain of ways of cooking, which is a way of dealing with food and its corresponding sub-target domain of ways of dealing with humans, based on the following examples.

- (2) *ney mal-ey                      nay    sok-i*  
 your words-because of I-GEN intestine-NOM  
*pwukulpwukul kkulh-nun-ta*  
 boiling sound boil-PRES-DEC  
 'What you say makes me provoked.'
- (3) *anay-nun    welsey                      muwncey-lo                      mayil*  
 wife-TOP monthly rent issue-because of every day  
*nampyeon-ul    tultul                      pokk-nun-ta*  
 husband-ACC sauteing sound saute-PRES-DEC  
 'The wife bothers her husband every day because of the monthly rent issue.'
- (4) *ku    salam-i                      pantayha-nun    salam-tul-ul*  
 the person-NOM oppose-REL    person-PL-ACC  
*ton-ulo                      kuw-e                      salm-ass-ta*  
 money-INST bake-LNK boil-PST-DEC  
 'The person persuaded the opposing people with money.'
- (5) *ceney-tul-iya                      cici-tun    pokk-tun*  
 that person-PL-TOP panfry-or roast-regardless of  
*wuli-nun tomangga-nun kes-i                      sangchayk-iya*  
 we-TOP escape-REL    thing-NOM best policy-DEC  
 'Regardless of whether those are struggling, it is the best policy for us to escape quickly.'

There are, of course, many different ways of dealing with food, one of

which is cooking. Among them are boiling, sauteing, baking, pan-frying, and roasting. There are also many ways of dealing with human beings. Examples (2), (3), (4), and (5) further show the mapping between the sub-source domain of ways of cooking and the sub-target domain of ways of dealing with human beings, as in the following diagram:

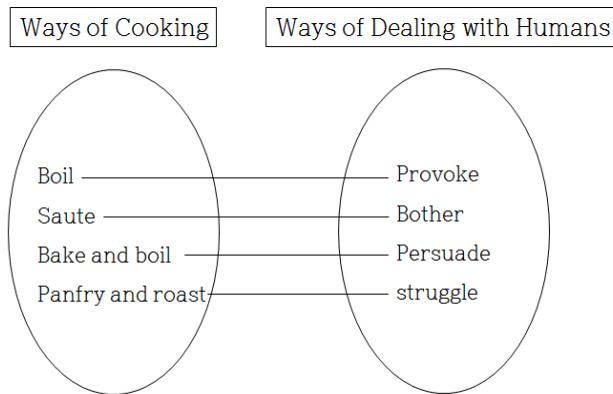


Diagram 3. Mapping between cooking and dealing

The above diagram represents the mapping between the ways of cooking, which are elements of the source domain, and the ways of dealing with humans, which are elements of the target domain. *Boil*, a way of cooking, is mapped onto *provoke or make angry*, a way of dealing with human beings. When water boils, it cannot stand still. It is forced to be stirred upside down, and bubbles come out from inside and irritate the surface. When a person is provoked or made angry, it is hard for the person to keep composed and calm down.

*Saute*, an element of the source domain of cooking, is mapped onto *bother*, an element of the target domain of ways of dealing with human beings. When some food ingredients are sauteed or fried quickly, they are forced to keep moving to different directions or places on a frying pan in order to keep them from being overcooked. When someone is not left alone, they are, in some sense, bothered.

*Bake and boil*, an element of the source domain of cooking, is mapped onto *persuade or control*, an element of the target domain of ways of dealing with

human beings. Baking and boiling are in most cases two mutually exclusive ways of cooking. It is rare to both *bake and boil* food ingredients or *boil and bake* them, in the reverse order, because baking is, in one sense, for the purpose of keeping food ingredients from water and, on the other hand, because boiling is a way of cooking to use water to heat food ingredients or to incorporate water as part of food. Baking and boiling is equivalent to cooking food using a combination of two ways of cooking which are not compatible with each other. If someone is able to bake and boil food ingredients and produce a desirable dish, then it is possible to say that cooking is under their control. If someone 'bake and boil' someone else, it means that they are able to tell somebody to do something or trick somebody into doing something. It is natural that *bake and boil* is mapped onto *persuade* or *control*.

*Panfry and roast*, an element of the source domain of cooking, is mapped onto *struggle*, an element of the target domain of ways of dealing with human beings. If some food is pan-fried and roasted, the cooking process will make some noise, and its ingredients will be forced to move to different directions and places in order to be kept from being overcooked. If a person pan-fries and roasts something, it means that he is *struggling* in his life.

## 2.2. The HUMAN DISPOSITION IS FOOD TASTE metaphor

Let us investigate other sentences which contain metaphorical linguistic expressions, as follows:

- (6) ce salam-un puwca-lato nam-ul  
 that person-TOP rich person-though other-ACC  
 top-nun il-eynun hangsang cca-ta  
 help-REL work-CNTR always salty-DEC  
 'Even though that person is rich, he is stingy with helping others.'
- (7) ku-nun caymieps-ko singgewu-n salam-ita  
 he-TOP uninteresting-and bland-REL person-DEC  
 'He is uninteresting without a strong personality.'
- (8) kwanli-tul-un puwpayha-ess-ta  
 official-PL-TOP rotten-PST-DEC  
 'The officials were corrupt.'

- (9) ku yeca-nun heyeng-ey ppaci-e iss-e  
 the woman-TOP vanity-LOC fall-CLM be-because  
 pap mas-ita  
 rice taste-DEC  
 'She is disliked because she is in vanity.'

The above examples show that another sub-source domain in the HUMANS ARE FOOD metaphor is different tastes of food and its corresponding sub-target domain is human disposition, as seen in the diagram below.

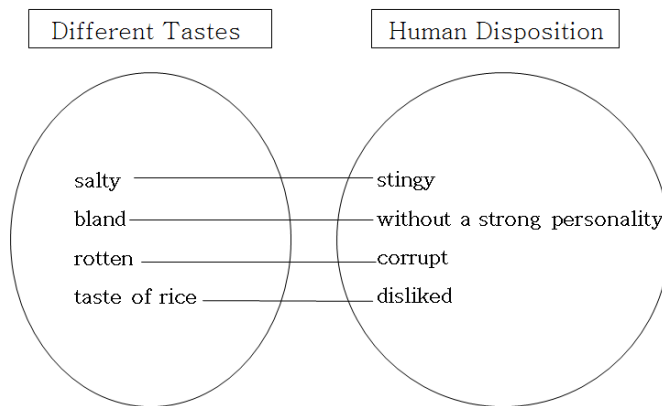


Diagram 4. Mapping between food taste and disposition

The above diagram stands for the mapping between the source domain of taste of food and the target domain of a human disposition. The quality of food is mainly dependent upon its taste. Likewise, what a person is like mainly relies upon his/her character. There may be different expressions describing different tastes of food. There may also be different descriptions on human disposition. *Salty* in the source domain of taste of food is mapped onto *stingy* in the target domain of human disposition or character. Let us think of an old Korean folk tale. So goes the saying: 'A stingy or very thrifty man hung a salted, dry fish over his table. Whenever he had meals, he put a spoonful of cooked rice into his mouth and just looked up at the salted fish instead of eating it as a side dish'. This way he could enjoy his meal without consuming the salted fish. He knew that he could not have his cake and eat it, too. He is

an extreme example of a miser. Traditionally, *salty* is naturally mapped onto *stingy*.

*Bland*, an element of the source domain of taste of food, is mapped onto *without a strong personality*, an element of the target domain of disposition. When some food tastes bland, it has no strong flavor or savor. If somebody is 'bland', then he has no strong personality.

*Rotten* in the source domain of taste of food is mapped onto *corrupt* in the target domain of disposition. If food is rotten, then it is not edible any more. Food is consumed so that human beings are provided with nutrients necessary to sustain their life. If food is not appropriate to be eaten, it cannot fulfill its function. If a society or its members are corrupt, they cannot function as they are supposed to. If food goes bad, then it becomes rotten. In this line of reasoning, *rotten* is mapped onto *corrupt* or *bad*.

*Taste of rice*, an element of the source domain of taste of food, is mapped onto *disliked*, an element of the target domain of human character. 'Taste of cooked rice' in Korean has its literal meaning in some cases and it means appetite in other cases, perhaps because cooked rice is a staple food and it is traditionally enjoyed at all three regular meals a day. In other words, rice stands for meals and we say, "Have you eaten cooked rice?" instead of saying, "Have you had a meal?" Thus 'taste of rice' has come to mean appetite. The sentence *I have 'taste of rice'* means that I have a good appetite. Likewise, the sentence *I don't have 'taste of rice'* means that I don't have appetite. Then the question is why 'taste of rice' is mapped onto *disgusting* or *disliked*. As mentioned previously, rice is conventionally what everybody has for every meal. Therefore it itself is nothing special or new. It is something ordinary, old, and customary. In a sense, it is something boring, uninteresting, or unattractive. This line of reasoning may be how 'taste of rice' has become to mean *disliked* or even *disgusting*.

In contrast, Hong (2008) claims that the sentence *I don't have 'taste of rice'* is reduced to just 'taste of rice' and it still means the same thing. If his claim is proved to be true, then it is paradoxical or ironical for the expression 'taste of rice' to mean the opposite of its literal meaning. Perhaps it is a characteristic of slangs or vulgar expressions to convey the opposite of their literal sense paradoxically or ironically.



### 2.3. The EMOTION IS FOOD INTAKE metaphor

Let us consider the sentences in which emotions are structured in terms of ways of food intake, as follows:

- (10) ku-nun casik-ul ttena-ponay-nun  
 he-TOP child-ACC leave-send-REL  
 sulpum-ul maspo-ass-ta  
 sadness-ACC taste-PST-DEC  
 'He felt sad to lose his child.'
- (11) ku haksayng-un pwullyangpay-eykey  
 the student-TOP bully-DAT  
 kep-mek-ess-ta  
 fear-eat-PST-DEC  
 'The student felt afraid of the bully.'
- (12) apeci-ka tolakasi-n huw sulpum-ul  
 father-NOM pass away-LNK after sadness-ACC  
 samki-mye ku-nun kongpwu-lul kyeysocha-ess-ta  
 swallow-CLM he-TOP study-ACC continue-PST-DEC  
 'He continued to study enduring his sadness after his father passed away.'
- (13) ku salam-un uwsum-ul mekum-ko  
 the person-TOP smile-ACC keep in mouth-CLM  
 takao-ass-ta  
 approach-PST-DEC  
 'The person approached me having a sign of smile.'

The above sentences show that another sub-source domain of the HUMANS ARE FOOD metaphor can be ways of food intake, and its corresponding sub-target domain of the same metaphor can be types of emotions, as seen in the diagram below:

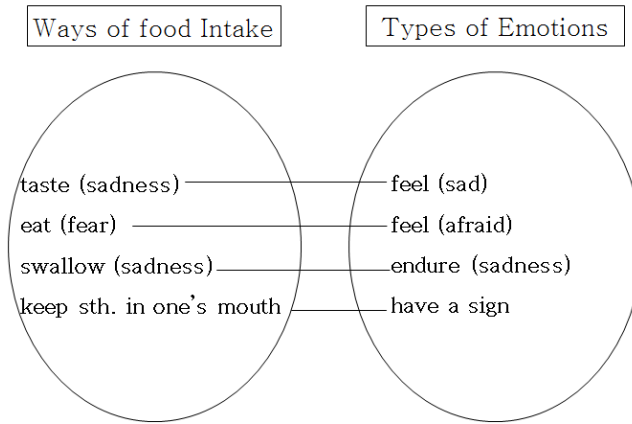


Diagram 5. Mapping between food intake and emotions

The above diagram symbolizes the mapping between the source domain of ways of food intake and the target domain of types of emotions. The HAVING EMOTIONS IS FOOD INTAKE sub-metaphor enables us to understand abstract target concepts via bodily source experiences. *Taste (sadness, for instance)* and *eat (fear, for example)* in the source domain of ways of food intake are mapped onto *feel (a type of emotion)* in the target domain of types of emotions. Tasting and eating result in a sensory reaction and types of emotions are abstract counterparts of sensory feelings.

*Swallow (sadness, for instance)* in the source domain of ways of food intake is mapped onto *endure (sadness, for example)* in the target domain of types of emotions. The word *swallow* is the opposite of *vomit*. If you vomit something, then you do not accept it. If you swallow something, then you accept it and you endure it even though it is something unpleasant.

*Keep something in one's mouth* in the source domain of ways of food intake is mapped onto *have a sign or an indication* in the target domain of types of emotions. If someone keeps something in their mouth, they still have a sign or an indication of something. If something is in someone's mouth, it is not clearly shown to others, but they know that there is something in the person's mouth, and in some cases, they may also know what it is.

#### 2.4. The EXPERIENCES ARE FOOD TASTE metaphor

Let us take into account the examples in which human experiences are understood in terms of different food tastes, as follows:

- (14) ku-nun acik eyle-se insayng-uy  
 he-TOP still young-CLM life-GEN  
 ssun mas-ul po-ci mos ha-ess-ta  
 bitter taste-ACC see-LNK NEG do-PST-DEC  
 'He has not had bad experiences because he is still young.'
- (15) na-nun hyuwka-lul mac-a cip-eyse  
 I-TOP vacation-ACC face-CLM home-LOC  
 naccam-uy tan mas-ey chuyha-lswuiss-ess-ta  
 nap-GEN sweet taste-LOC drunk-able-PST-DEC  
 'I could have the good experiences of taking a nap at home during my vacation.'
- (16) ku-nun insayng-uy ssun mas tan mas  
 he-TOP life-GEN bitter taste sweet taste  
 ta po-ass-ta  
 all see-PST-DEC  
 'He has had both happy and sad experiences in his life.'
- (17) ney-ka acikto palun soli-lul an ha-nun  
 you-NOM yet true sound-ACC NEG do-REL  
 kes-ul po-ni mayuwn mas-ul  
 thing-ACC see-CLM spicy taste-ACC  
 tel pon moyang-i-kuwna  
 less see shape-PRED-EXCL  
 'You do not seem to be caused to feel pain not to tell the truth yet!'

The above sentences show that another sub-source domain of the HUMANS ARE FOOD metaphor can be taste of food and its corresponding sub-target domain of the same metaphor can be human experiences, as seen in the diagram below:

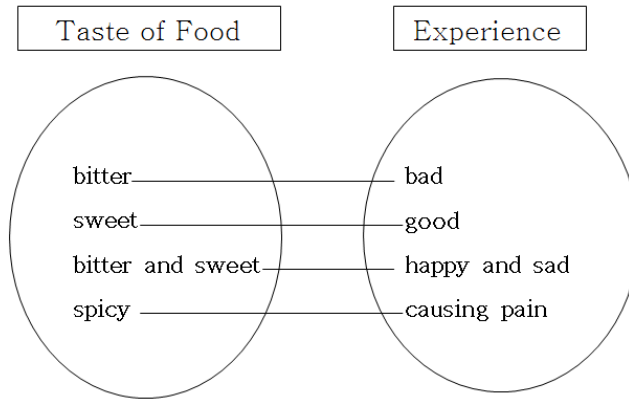


Diagram 6. Mapping between food taste and experiences

The elements in the source domain of taste of food are mapped onto those in the target domain of human experiences. We experience food through taste and, likewise, we experience life through things good and bad, or happy and sad. *Bitter taste* in the source domain of taste of food is mapped onto *bad experiences* or *bad luck* in life in the target domain of human experiences. Nobody enjoys food of bitter taste or wants to have it. Only when they are required to have it, for example, for health-related reasons, do they have it. Likewise, nobody enjoys bad experiences or bad luck in their life or wants to have them.

*Sweet taste* in the source domain of taste of food is mapped onto *good* or *happy experiences* in the target domain of human experiences. Human beings have a sweet tooth regardless of their age or gender. Everyone enjoys food of sweet taste and wants to have it until they are saturated. Good or happy experiences are what everyone wants to have in their life and the only experiences they want to fill their life with.

*Bitter taste (and) sweet taste* in the source domain of food taste is mapped onto *both happy and sad experiences* or *both fortune and misfortune* in life. *Bitter* and *sweet* are contrastive taste of food, on the one hand, and good (happy) life and bad (sad) life are opposing human experiences, on the other. *Bitter taste (and) sweet taste* of life further means all possible ways or experiences of life.

*Spicy*, an element of the source domain of taste of food, is mapped onto

*causing pain*, an element of the target domain of human experiences. When we have something spicy like hot red pepper, we feel the heat and pain associated with capsaicin transmitted from our sensory neurons in the tongue to our brain and pain is felt; therefore we feel a pain. *Spicy* is mapped onto *causing pain* in the line of this reasoning. It is interesting to see that some taste is mapped onto human disposition and others are onto experiences.

## 2.5. The QUALITIES OF IDEAS ARE FOOD CONDITIONS metaphor

Let us consider the examples showing that qualities of ideas are understood in terms of different food conditions, as follows:

- (18) sayngkak-ul yakkan-man cenhwanha-myen ilehkey  
 idea-ACC little-only change-if like this  
 sinsenha-n kes-i na-o-lswu-to-iss-ta  
 fresh-REL thing-NOM out-come-able-even-be-DEC  
 'If you change the way you think, then you can have such a new idea.'
- (19) selik-un sayngkak-ul hampuwlo malha-cima-la  
 unripe-ADJ idea-ACC carelessly tell-NEG-IMP  
 'Do not tell an incomplete idea hurriedly.'

The above sentences show that another sub-source domain of the HUMANS ARE FOOD metaphor can be the conditions of food and its corresponding sub-target domain of the same metaphor can be the qualities of ideas, as seen in the diagram below:

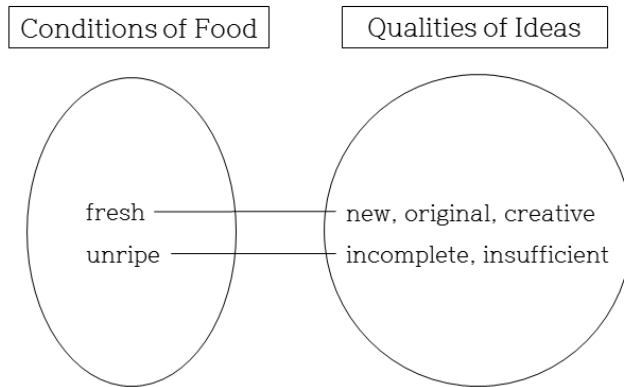


Diagram 7. Mapping between food conditions and idea qualities

The above diagram shows the mapping between the source domain of conditions of food and the target domain of qualities of ideas. The IDEA QUALITIES ARE FOOD CONDITIONS sub-metaphor enables us to understand abstract target concepts via empirical source elements. *Fresh* in the source domain of food conditions is mapped onto *new, original, or creative* in the target domain of idea qualities. If food is fresh, it is not old, but new, as in such phrases as *fresh from the oven* or *oven-fresh* and *fresh from the sea*. If an idea is fresh, it is new. A new idea is an original one, and an original idea is usually a creative one.

*Unripe*, an element of the source domain of food conditions is mapped onto *incomplete*, an element of the target domain of idea qualities. If a fruit is not ripe, it is not in its complete condition ready to eat. If some food is undercooked, it is not ready to eat and said to be 'unripe' in Korean. If an idea is not cooked up, it is not complete or ingenious.

### 3. Conclusion

This paper shows that conceptual metaphors provide ways of understanding human beings in terms of food. The crucial elements of human existence may include dealing with other humans, feeling emotions, and having ideas,

dispositions and experiences. Correspondingly, the crucial elements of food may include cooking, intake, conditions, and taste. Humans and their crucial elements are of less concrete experiences than food and its crucial elements, and the former is understood with regard to the latter.

This study also shows that the super-domain we use for understanding humans is food, and that sub-domains are cooking, food intake, food conditions, and food taste. Such metaphorical super-concept as HUMANS ARE FOOD leads to such conceptual sub-metaphors as DEALING WITH HUMANS IS COOKING, FEELING EMOTIONS IS FOOD INTAKE, IDEA QUALITIES ARE FOOD CONDITIONS, DISPOSITION IS FOOD TASTE, and EXPERIENCES ARE FOOD TASTE. For instance, *food* is mapped onto *humans* and then *cooking*, an element of the source domain of food is sub-mapped onto dealing with human beings, an element of the target domain of humans. In turn, *boil*, an element of the sub-source domain of cooking, is sub-sub-mapped onto *provoke*, an element of the sub-target domain of dealing with human beings. Therefore, the HUMANS ARE FOOD metaphor is a three-dimensional structured whole.

Consequently, this study shows that the conceptual super-metaphor and its sub-metaphors are interrelated with and interdependent upon one another even though they appear to be separate and isolated from, or independent of one another, as the diagram below epitomizes it.

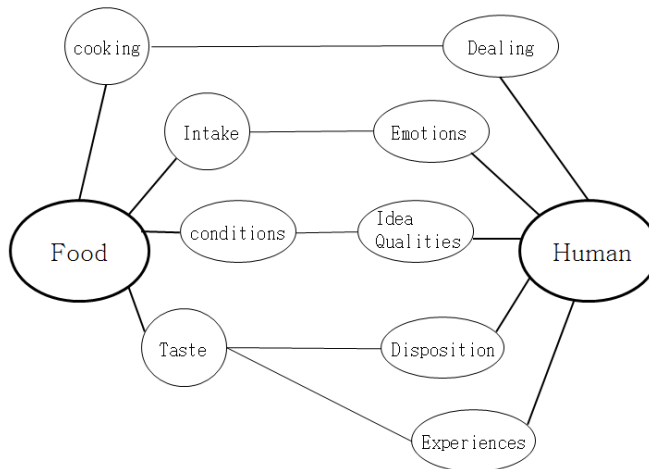


Diagram 8. Network of food-related metaphors

Future research may well include more conceptual sub-metaphors under the super-metaphor of humans as food and categorize them as literal or conventional, extended, and novel metaphors. As a matter of course, their relationships can be looked into in terms of radial categories (Lakoff, 1987) or family resemblances (Wittgenstein, 1953).

## References

- Casad, E. H. (1996). Introduction. In E. H. Casad, (Ed.), *Cognitive linguistics in the redwoods: The expansion of a new paradigm in linguistics* (pp. 1-24), Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Choi, Y. (2014). Food as a source domain of metaphor in Korean and English. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal*, 22(4), 121-141.
- Hong, S.-H. (2008). *Cincca gyengcaynglyekun guwke sillyekita*. Goyang, Gyenggi: Wisdom House.
- Khajeh, Z., & Abdullah, I.-H. (2012). Persian culinary metaphors: A cross-cultural conceptualization. GEMA OnlineTM. *Journal of Language Studies*, 12(1), 69-87.
- Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, fire, and dangerous things*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980a). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980b). Conceptual metaphor in everyday language. *Journal of Philosophy*, 77(8), 453-486.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2003). *Metaphors we live by* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL and London, UK: University of Chicago Press.
- Lim, J.-R. (2003). Aspects of the metaphorical conceptualisation of basic emotions in Korean. *Studies in Modern Grammar*, 32, 141-167.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical investigations*. New York: Macmillan.
- Yu, N. (2008). Metaphor from body and culture. In R. W. Gibbs, Jr. (Ed.), *Metaphor and thought* (pp. 247-261). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



**Heechul Lee**

Department of English Education  
College of Education, Chonbuk National University  
664-1 Deokjin-dong, Deokjin-gu  
Jeonju 561-756, Korea  
Phone: 82-63-270-2719  
Email: hlee@jbnu.ac.kr

**Chonghyuck Kim**

Department of English Language and Literature  
College of Humanities, Chonbuk National University  
664-1 Deokjin-dong, Deokjin-gu  
Jeonju 561-756, Korea  
Phone: 82-63-270-3209  
Email: chonghyuck@jbnu.ac.kr

Received on September 30, 2015

Revised version received on December 23, 2015

Accepted on December 31, 2015